DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 135 449 JC 770 182

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TITLE A Study of Achievement of Objectives by the Entering Class of 1971.
INSTITUTION Suffolk County Community Coll., Selden, N.Y.
PUB DATE Oct 76
NOTE 25p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Achievement; *Aspiration; Community Colleges; *Educational Objectives; *Failure Factors; *Followup Studies; Goal Orientation; Institutional Research; *Junior Colleges; Junior College Students; Objectives; Occupational Aspiration; *Self Evaluation; Student Opinion; Surveys

ABSTRACT

As part of a follow-up study of 1971 entrants to Suffolk County Community College, a questionnaire was sent to 717 former full- and part-time students matriculated in associate degree programs to determine whether the students' objectives in attending the college had been achieved. Of those surveyed, 370 responded. Analysis of data obtained from the survey revealed that only 4.5% of the respondents felt that they had achieved their objectives (which they were asked to state in their own words) while enrolled. However, nearly 90% expected to graduate. Notably, those who reported they had achieved their objectives were able to state them with precision, while those who reported they had not achieved their objectives were either unable to state their objectives or provided a nebulous response. Of the students who did not feel they had attained their objectives, the majority cited financial and family reasons as being the cause of their failure to do so. Overall, the data showed that the college met the educational and employment needs of its student body and that the institution's goals were consistent with most student objectives. It was concluded that personal factors, principally those that were financial and familial, had the greatest influence on objective achievement by students. Tabular data are presented throughout the report. (JDS)

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Suffolk County Community College
SELDEN CAMPUS

A STUDY OF ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES BY THE ENTERING CLASS OF 1971

OCTOBER, 1976

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PREFACE

This study was undertaken in order to provide some information about the outcomes of the college programs. The college institutional research efforts have in large part in the past been concentrated on the graduates and on their success in achieving a successful transfer to four year schools and also in the graduates' success in finding employment.

This study was an attempt to determine the levels of success achieved by students in attaining their own personal goals. Rather than investigating a group of graduates, since it is known that students may achieve their goals without graduating from the college, a group of entering students was selected.

The responses from this group of students predictably did not fit any pattern. The personal goals they were trying to achieve were not as clear to them as one might hope to see. The data was not easily categorizeable and was not as easily described as data returned from a study of transfer rates.

This report was prepared by Darlene P. Hochman from data collected by the Central Office of Institutional Services. She has described the results clearly and has tried to draw some relationships which seemed to emanate from the data.

Future studies of this kind can improve especially if comments or suggestions are made and communicated to the Central Office of Institutional Services. Suggestions for improvement are always welcome.

Paul C. Libassi
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INTRODUCTION

In any follow-up study of an entering class, the following questions seem to arise time and again. Are students aware of their objectives upon entering college? Are these objectives limited to academic achievements or are they in the area of personal and/or social development?

In carefully examining the rapid growth of Suffolk County Community College and the wide range in background of entering students, it would appear that knowledge and understanding of students' goals and objectives for obtaining a college education would be a major asset in program planning, development and revision. If clearer understanding of the purposes of college attendance could be ascertained, perhaps avenues of greater communication between school and student will be achieved. The need for ways of facilitating communication between institution and student is vital to the growth of both and can be mutually beneficial.

As part of the follow-up study for 1971 entrants to Suffolk County Community College, a questionnaire was sent to students to determine whether their objectives in attending the College, either as a full-time or a part-time matriculated student were achieved and, if not, why not.

METHOD AND SAMPLE

The survey was sent to 717 students who were matriculated in either the A.A., A.S., A.A.S. or Dental Certificate degree programs. As shown in Table 1, three hundred seventy questionnaires were returned. Responses from those college curriculums which numbered fewer than 5 were eliminated from the curriculum listing, but included in the general list of type of degree and in the College totals. Tables in the present study will use the total number of responses and percentiles will reflect these numbers. Non-matriculated students were not included since the study concerned itself with goal achievement and employment related to the educational program taken at Suffolk County Community College. It was felt that students not matriculated in any particular program would not be as definite or clear about their expectations and outcomes desired from college attendance.

The majority of the students responding, 81.35%, were enrolled primarily as full-time students attending day classes. The percentages of full-time students for the various college curriculums are given in Table 2.

The present study utilized the questionnaire-survey technique. The instrument was developed by the Office of Institutional Services. It consisted of a mimeographed sheet of thirteen questions with the respondents' name and address attached. Space was provided for students to write comments, if desired, on objective attainment.

TABLE 1

1971 ENTRANTS

DISTRIBUTION OF
GRADUATES AND RESPONDENTS

S.C.C.C. CURRICULUMS	NO. OF ENTRANTS	NO. OF GRADUATES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS
Humanities A.A.	35	13	11
Social Science A.A.	23	7	8
Mathematics A.A.	12	3	5
General Studies A.A.	362	185	169
Science A.S.	46	22	19
Electrical Technology A.A.S.	7	1	7
Nursing A.A.S.	24	18	20
Community Service A.A.S.	7	6	6
Criminal Justice A.A.S.	41	21	32
Secretarial Science A.A.S.	41	25	20
Data Processing A.A.S.	13	6	8
Business Admin. A.A.S.	26	23	26
Accounting A.A.S.	32	21	16
Dental Assist. Cert.	10	10	6
All A.A.	432	208	193
All A.S.	53	24	22
All Liberal Arts A.A. & A.S.	485	232	215
All Engin. Tech. A.A.S.	11	3	10
Health A.A.S.	50	34	32
Business A.A.S.	125	82	76
All A.A.S.	232	141	155
All College	717	373	370

TABLE 2

1971 ENTRANTS

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS' ATTENDANCE IN DAY AND EVENING COLLEGE

S.C.C.C. CURRICULUMS	NO. OF STUDENTS DAY	NO. OF STUDENTS EVENING	% OF DAY
Humanities A.A.	7	4	63.64
Social Science A.A.	4	4	50.00
Mathematics A.A.	4	1	80.00
General Studies A.A.	149	19	88.17
Science A.S.	17	2	89.47
Electrical Technology A.A.S.	5	2	71.43
Nursing A.A.S.	18	2	90.00
Community Service A.A.S.	5	1	83.33
Criminal Justice A.A.S.	15	17	46.80
Secretarial Science A.A.S.	20	0	100.00
Data Processing A.A.S.	6	2	75.00
Business Admin. A.A.S.	13	13	50.00
Accounting A.A.S.	15	1	93.75
Dental Assist. Cert.	5	1	83.33
All A.A.	164	28	84.97
All A.S.	20	2	90.91
All Liberal Arts A.A. & A.S.	184	30	85.58
Engin. Tech. A.A.S.	8	2	80.00
Health A.A.S.	29	3	90.63
Business A.A.S.	60	16	78.95
All A.A.S.	117	38	75.48
All College	301	68	81.35

Students were asked, "Did you achieve your objective?" and had to check either "Yes" or "No". They were asked to state their objective in their own words. If a student wrote that their objective was not achieved, she/he was asked to give the major reason in the space accompanying this question.

Students were also surveyed for information about transfer to four-year institutions and for information pertaining to employment after leaving Suffolk County Community College. The latter was an attempt to discover whether employment was related to the students' Suffolk Community College emphasis.

Respondents to the survey were asked how much of their course work had been accomplished at an extension center of Suffolk Community College. Table 3 gives (of those responding) the number of students who completed some or all course work at an extension center, the number who did not attend an extension center and the percentage of students who took some or all courses at an extension center. It may be significant to note those programs whose students do or do not make use of these centers. Are students in certain programs encouraged to attend classes on the main campus for specific reasons determined by the various departments, or aren't enough courses offered at these extension centers to allow students to get full use from these facilities?

In responding to the question, "Will you graduate?" many students, it seems, indicated their inability to clarify their objectives by leaving this space blank. This in itself makes an inter-

TABLE 3

1971 ENTRANTS

DISTRIBUTION OF COURSE WORK COMPLETED AT AN S.C.C.C. EXTENSION CENTER

S.C.C.C. CURRICULUM	NO. COMP. SOME OR ALL AT CENTER	NO. COMP. NONE AT CENTER	% COMP. SOME OR ALL AT CENTER
Humanities A.A.	3	8	27.27
Social Science A.A.	4	4	50.00
Mathematics A.A.	1	4	20.00
General Studies A.A.	32	137	18.93
Science A.S.	2	17	10.52
Electrical Technology A.A.S.	2	5	28.57
Nursing A.A.S.	2	18	10.00
Community Service A.A.S.	3	3	50.00
Criminal Justice A.A.S.	5	27	15.63
Secretarial Science A.A.S.	2	18	10.00
Data Processing A.A.S.	2	6	25.00
Business Admin. A.A.S.	13	13	50.00
Accounting A.A.S.	2	14	12.50
Dental Assist. Cert.	2	4	33.33
All A.A.	40	153	20.73
All A.S.	4	18	18.18
All Liberal Arts A.A. & A.S.	44	171	20.47
Engin. Tech. A.A.S.	2	8	20.00
Health A.A.S.	5	27	15.62
Business A.A.S.	20	56	26.32
All A.A.S.	32	123	20.65
All College	76	294	20.54

TABLE 4

1971 ENTRANTS

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS
EXPECTING TO GRADUATE

S.C.C.C. CURRICULUMS	NO. WILL GRAD.	NO. WILL NOT GRAD.	% WILL GRAD.
Humanities A.A.	6	0	100.00
Social Science A.A.	4	0	100.00
Mathematics A.A.	2	1	66.67
General Studies A.A.	82	14	85.42
Science A.S.	11	0	100.00
Electrical Technology A.A.S.	0	1	0
Nursing A.A.S.	8	0	100.00
Community Service A.A.S.	4	0	100.00
Criminal Justice A.A.S.	19	2	90.48
Secretarial Science A.A.S.	5	2	71.43
Data Processing A.A.S.	2	0	100.00
Business Admin. A.A.S.	13	0	100.00
Accounting A.A.S.	9	2	81.82
Dental Assist. Cert.	1	0	100.00
All A.A.	94	15	86.24
All A.S.	12	0	100.00
All Liberal Arts A.A. & A.S.	106	15	87.60
Engin. Tech. A.A.S.	1	2	33.33
Health A.A.S.	13	0	100.00
Business AA.S.	31	4	88.57
All A.A.S.	65	8	89.04
All College	171	23	88.14

esting statement about goal achievement of students at Suffolk County Community College. Perhaps this inverse or non-response indicates a searching within the student herself/himself for a clearer picture of "Why am I here?" or "Is graduation my goal?" This speculation apparently is reinforced by the type of response given by those students who did answer this item. As shown in Table 5, of those students who replied to the question of graduating, 88.14% stated that "Yes" they do intend to graduate, while only 11.86% said they would not.

The percentage rates of transfer, along with the number of students, is given in Table 5. In the sample, 233 students responded that they did transfer to baccalaureate granting institutions, while 128 did not continue with their education. This shows that almost sixty-three percent (62.97%) of the students at Suffolk County Community College do go on to other colleges and universities to complete their education. It is important to note that of those students who transfer, 58.11% of them will attend the college of their choice as a full-time student and 41.89% will attend as part-time students. Many students pursuing a baccalaureate degree may have to subsidize their last two years of college by employment. This employment may be in the area related to course work previously taken at Suffolk Community College which enabledthem to obtain the position in the first place.

TABLE 5

1971 ENTRANTS

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS
TRANSFERRING TO 4-YEAR COLLEGE

S.C.C.C. CURRICULUMS	NO. TRANS.	NO. NON-TRANSFER	% TRANS. 4-YR	% TRANS. F/T
Humanities A.A.	7	4	63.64	36.36
Social Science A.A.	4	3	50.00	50.00
Mathematics A.A.	3	2	60.00	60.00
General Studies A.A.	109	57	64.50	60.36
Science A.S.	14	5	73.68	52.63
Electrical Technology A.A.S.	1	5	14.29	14.29
Nursing A.A.S.	13	6	65.00	15.00
Community Service A.A.S.	5	1	83.33	66.67
Criminal Justice A.A.S.	19	12	59.38	50.00
Secretarial Science A.A.S.	15	5	75.00	20.00
Data Processing A.A.S.	6	2	75.00	25.00
Business Admin. A.A.S.	17	8	65.38	26.92
Accounting A.A.S.	8	7	50.00	56.27
Dental Assist. Cert.	3	3	50.00	50.00
All A.A.	123	66	63.73	58.55
All A.S.	15	7	68.18	50.00
All Liberal Arts A.A. & A.S.	138	73	64.19	57.67
Engin. Tech. A.A.S.	3	6	30.00	30.00
Health A.A.S.	23	8	71.88	28.13
Business A.A.S.	48	26	63.16	30.26
All A.A.S.	95	55	61.29	58.71
All College	233	128	62.97	58.11

Students who did not transfer full-time to a four year college were asked their main occupation and whether this employment related to their Suffolk Community College emphasis. Slightly above forty-five percent (45.33%) of the total student response, as indicated in Table 6, was to the affirmative. It may be significant to note the high percentage rate of positive answers by students in the Health A.A.S. and Business A.A.S. degrees whose replies were a total of eighty-three percent (83.33%) for the former and seventy-one percent (71.91%) for the latter. Also the total A.A.S. program had a positive response of almost sixty-seven percent (66.96%). One interpretation of these findings is that the very nature of the A.A.S. programs is their career orientation. As stated in the college catalog, "These two-year A.A.S. degree programs prepare students for entry into a specific technical or semi-professional career field immediately after graduation." The other degree programs at Suffolk Community College are, on the other hand, geared for those students who intend to complete their freshman and sophomore years and then continue towards a baccalaureate degree at a four year institution. These statements would further tend to reinforce the results of the survey given in Table 6, since both the A.A. and A.S. degree programs are not geared to specific careers, but try as quoted in the college catalog to "provide students with considerable flexibility" and to use these programs "to design a curriculum which parallels the first two years of study at the college or university to which they intend to transfer".

TABLE 6

1971 ENTRANTS

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT
RELATED TO PROGRAM AT S.C.C.C.

S.C.C.C. CURRICULUMS	% WHOSE EMPLOYMENT RELATES TO EDUCATION AT S.C.C.C.
Humanities A.A.	16.67
Social Science A.A.	100.00
Mathematics A.A.	66.67
General Studies A.A.	14.81
Science A.S.	42.86
Electrical Technology A.A.S.	57.14
Nursing A.A.S.	86.67
Community Service A.A.S.	75.00
Criminal Justice A.A.S.	52.63
Secretarial Science A.A.S.	68.42
Data Processing A.A.S.	71.43
Business Administration A.A.S.	83.33
Accounting A.A.S.	71.43
Dental Assist. Cert.	83.33
All A.A.	19.35
All A.S.	44.44
All Liberal Arts A.A. & A.S.	21.57
Engin. Tech. A.A.S.	60.00
Health A.A.S.	83.33
Business A.A.S.	70.91
All A.A.S.	66.96
All College	45.33

A cursory glance at the total college response to find out the relationship between employment and program emphasis taken at Suffolk County Community College may therefore be quite misleading and an interpretation of the total response percentage can give an inaccurate description of the college's graduates. It would be advisable that one interested in the employment of graduates as it relates to the area of college study should look closely, instead, at the responses of the various degree programs, both individually and as a collective group. The specific information yielded from this listing will give a far clearer and more realistic description of the relationship existing between the two variables.

As maintained in the introduction of this follow-up study, the salient purpose of this endeavor was to determine whether or not the objectives of students had been achieved by their attendance at Suffolk County Community College. As an integral component of this effort, the nature of the students' goals and the reasons for lack of goal achievement, if this were the case, were solicited. While numerical tables can satisfy that area of knowledge and showed about how many did or did not achieve their objectives and can help in understanding the categories of reasons for non-attainment, it would seem that greater comprehension could be achieved by awareness of just what the students' objectives were when stated by the students themselves. For this purpose, many

of the students own responses will be used to further the reader's appreciation of objective achievement at Suffolk County Community College.

Table 7 gives the percentage distribution of goal achievement by Suffolk County Community College students. It is obvious upon first perusal that the majority of students at the College did not feel that they were successful in meeting their objectives. It would also appear that these percentages seem inordinately low. Before discussing any interpretation of these results, the reader should find it helpful to study the next tables, Table 8 and 9. Table 8 gives the percentage distribution of reasons listed for not achieving objectives. This breakdown includes the following categories: financial reasons, family reasons, illness, work was too demanding, did not like college, job responsibilities, changed my objectives, other. As can be readily observed, the two areas that overwhelmingly predominate as causes for lack of goal achievement are the financial and familial ones. To aid in clarification, Table 9 was constructed giving just the percentage distribution of what the results indicate to be the prime reasons for non-achievement of goals: financial problems and family obligations. These findings are significant and must be considered when interpreting and making assumptions about the results of this investigation.

Other than financial and family reasons, it was found when

TABLE 7

1971 ENTRANTS

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF
OBJECTIVE ACHIEVEMENT BY STUDENTS

S.C.C.C. CURRICULUMS	% WHO ACHIEVED OBJECTIVE
Humanities A.A.	18.18
Social Science A.A.	12.50
Mathematics A.A.	20.00
General Studies A.A.	12.43
Science A.S.	15.79
Electrical Technology A.A.S.	0
Nursing A.A.S.	0
Community Service A.A.S.	0
Criminal Justice A.A.S.	3.13
Secretarial Science A.A.S.	15.00
Data Processing A.A.S.	0
Business Admin. A.A.S.	7.69
Accounting A.A.S.	0
Dental Assist. Cert.	16.67
All A.A.	3.11
All A.S.	13.64
All Liberal Arts A.A. & A.S.	4.19
Engin. Tech. A.A.S.	10.00
Health A.A.S.	0
Business A.A.S.	7.89
All A.A.S.	5.16
All College	4.59

reading actual student responses, that there was a wide diversity in stating just what a student's objective was. This condition might be explained by the variation and scope of the people attending a community college such as Suffolk. The College catalog states that Suffolk County Community College is geared to "make available a comprehensive program to meet the needs of young people and adults in Suffolk County for education beyong the high school level". It is a college that extends itself to its community and is flexible in its design to allow for this "comprehensive" programming and for a heterogeneous student population. This difference and variety of people attending Suffolk County Community College may account for what seems to be a significant disparity between the great amount of students who expect to graduate (88% as shown in Table 4) and the small percentage who perceive their objectives as having been achieved here (4% as shown in Table 7).

It may be beneficial to reiterate the objectives and purposes of Suffolk County Community College in order to better understand what the differences are between the institution's goals and those of its student population. At times, student objectives may be at variance with those of the college, yet the fact that most students graduate, or expect to do so, or transfer, or are employed in occupations related to their emphasis, indicates that the college, itself, was far from delinquent in achieving its goals. The Suffolk County Community College Handbook clearly states that "through its

TABLE 8

1971 ENTRANTS

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF REASONS STATED FOR NOT ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES

S.C.C.C. CURRICULUMS	% FINAN. REASONS	% FAMILY REASONS	% ILLNESS	% WORK TOO DEMAND-ING	% DID NOT LIKE
Humanities A.A.	36.36	54.55	0	0	0
Social Science A.A.	50.00	37.50	12.50	0	0
Mathematics A.A.	80.00	40.00	0	0	0
General Studies A.A.	61.54	37.28	00.59	00.59	2.37
Science A.S.	57.89	42.11	0	0	5.26
Elect. Tech. A.A.S.	14.29	85.71	0	0	14.29
Nursing A.A.S.	30.00	65.00	5.00	5.00	0
Community Service A.A.S.	66.67	33.33	0	0	0
Criminal Justice A.A.S.	59.38	40.63	0	0	0
Secretarial Science A.A.S.	25.00	75.00	0	0	5.00
Data Processing A.A.S.	37.50	50.00	0	0	0
Business Admin. A.A.S.	30.77	69.23	0	7.69	0
Accounting A.A.S	62.50	37.50	6.25	0	0
Dental Assist. Cert.	0	100.00	0	0	0
All A.A.	60.00	38.34	1.04	.52	2.07
All A.S.	54.55	45.45	0	0	4.55
All Lib. Arts A.A. & A.A.S.	59.53	39.07	.93	.47	2.33
Engin. Tech. A.A.S	20.00	70.00	0	0	10.00
Health A.A.S.	37.50	59.38	3.13	3.13	0
Business A.A.S.	36.84	61.84	1.32	2.63	2.63
All A.A.S.	40.00	57.42	1.29	1.94	1.94
All College	51.35	46.76	.54	1.08	2.16

TABLE 9

1971 ENTRANTS
PERCENTAGE
DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS NOT ACHIEVING
OBJECTIVES DUE TO FINANCIAL & FAMILY REASONS

S.C.C.C. CURRICULUMS	% FINAN. REASONS	% FAMILY REASONS
Humanities A.A.	36.36	54.55
Social Science A.A.	50.00	37.50
Mathematics	80.00	40.00
General Studies A.A.	61.54	37.28
Science A.S.	57.89	42.11
Electrical Technology A.A.S.	14.29	85.71
Nursing A.A.S.	30.00	65.00
Community Service A.A.S.	66.67	33.33
Criminal Justice A.A.S.	59.38	40.63
Secretarial Science A.A.S.	25.00	75.00
Data Processing A.A.S.	37.50	50.00
Business Administration A.A.S.	30.77	69.23
Accounting A.A.S.	62.50	37.50
Dental Assist. Cert.	0	100.00
All A.A.	60.10	38.34
All A.S.	54.55	45.45
All Liberal Arts A.A. & A.S.	59.53	39.07
Engin. Tech. A.A.S.	20.00	70.00
Health A.A.S.	37.50	59.38
Business A.A.S.	36.84	61.84
All A.A.S.	40.00	57.42
All College	51.35	46.76

educational program, the College provides an opportunity for the individual student to realize the highest intellectual, social, physical, and personal development of which she/he is capable. The College aims to prepare the student so that she/he can either continue his education toward a baccalaureate degree or obtain gainful employment in a technical or semi-professional occupation".

Those students who answered "yes" to the question, "Did you achieve your objective?" appeared, by the comments given, to have educational and/or employment goals as the foremost determinant in pursuing a college education. Some of the most frequently repeated academic aims were: "to get an A.A. degree", "to get credits toward my major and to transfer to another college and graduate", "to get an A.A.S. degree", "to get a degree and acceptance into a state university", "to go on and become a certified teacher", "to get into a four year school", "to obtain my associates' degree", "to graduate". The students' comments with regard to employment ambitions were equally precise, lucidly defined and specific: "to become a certified dental assistant", "to obtain a secretarial position", "to get a surveyor's job after graduation", "to become a physical therapy assistant", "to be a secretary-bookkeeper", "to find a good job as a controls analyst", "to enter the business field", "to obtain insight into the world of business and real estate and to stimulate my mind".

The questionnaires received from those students responding negatively to the question, "Did you achieve your goals?" were very different in their style of answer. Most were not even able to state what their objective was and others were either uncertain or nebulous in their disclosures. It is also both curious and of importance to note that a few of the non-goal achieving students had similar objectives as the goal-achieving group. The responses of the former group included such statements as: "To get an education", "to work toward music courses eventually"; "haven't had enough time", "get associate degree-find out what interests me", "to take courses for personal enrichment", "self-fulfillment, learn to speak languages", "I simply wanted a college education", "graduation", "a degree". These reasons can be interpreted as goals involving personal development and a search that is highly individual in nature. As stated previously, the cause for lack of objective achievement in almost every case was given as due to financial or family problems. (See Tables 8 and 9) These findings indicate that students were not displeased or disappointed with the educational experience provided by Suffolk County Community College, but could not fulfill their aims or ambitions because of personal considerations.

SUMMARY

The present study was designed to examine and assess the personal objective-achievement rate of students who entered Suffolk County

Community College in 1971 in order to determine whether or not students' needs were met. The results indicated that the school does meet both the educational and employment needs of its student body and that these goals are consistent with most of the students" objectives. A major conclusion of the study gives evidence supporting the fact that personal reasons, principally those that are financial and familial in nature have the greatest influence in student objective achievement. Further studies in this area may be helpful to the college in determining how the institution can give support to its students in both these regions.

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